Dear Writing Project Community,

Our annual December writing conference was wonderful! We had an amazing turnout and so many exciting presentations. I obviously can’t write about them all in detail here, but I was inspired to imitate a poem from one of the workshops to capture a little something from each of them. My poem is based on Nikki Giovanni’s *Knoxville, Tennessee*.

**Irvine, California**

I always like writing conferences best
you can try poetry pacing ideas
from Carol Jago’s morning workshop
and argument kernels
and lingering and listening
and cultivating genius
and cultural responsiveness
and imitation
and levitating
and lots of
digital literacy
and reading groups
in the morning keynote

Dear Writing Project Friends,

Welcome to the December issue of *Wordplay*, the newsletter of the UCI Writing Project. As we embark on our second year of publication, I want to take a moment to thank the wonderful newsletter staff who have worked so hard all year to make this newsletter possible. Carol, Mooney, Laseanda Wesson, Megan Grint, Allison Sercecki, Liz Taireh, and Lynne Pantano, I could never have done this without you. You have created, curated, and said yes every time I asked, even in the midst of such busy lives. I look forward to working with you for many years to come.

I am also indebted to our faithful readers, and I hope that you will continue to read, enjoy, and perhaps even contribute to our publication. This month we have articles from several veteran WP fellows. Melissa Galvan and Jenny Hall write about how the strategies they learned at the Summer Institute continue to impact their teaching today. Another “veteran” fellow is Maria Jarak, whose poem “Winds of Change” speaks to our
and let the presenters help with
avoiding helicopter teaching
and cognitive impatience
and pitfalls of narrow prompts
in the sessions
and instead
try their afternoon workshop ideas like
making time for reading
and time to experiment
and collaborative argumentation
and rebuttal
and conversations
beyond agree or disagree
and celebrate through publication
and let students eat cake
all the time
not only when they qualify
and do it
without commas

Best,
Michael

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I hope that many more of you will
consider submitting some writing to the
newsletter in the coming months.
UCIWP is, above all else, a community
of writers, and we would love to see
more of our community represented
here.

As we look forward to the holiday
season, I wish you all a happy, and
peaceful New Year, and a restful, well-
deserved break.

Submissions to the newsletter may be
sent to
mrsharringtonjms@gmail.com, or
eharring@uci.edu. I look forward to
hearing from you.

With best wishes
Liz Harrington, Editor
eharring@uci.edu

Mark your Calendar
Upcoming events
**Thursday, Dec. 15, Lake Forest Writers’ Roundtable**
10:45 a.m-12:00 p.m. PST
Zoom Meeting
Lake Forest Writers’ Roundtable discussion group, featuring writing and publishing business topics, takes place from 10:45 a.m. to noon on Zoom. Meetings are free and open to the public. To receive Zoom access information, email Roundtable leader Barb DeLong at delongbarb15@gmail.com.

**Saturday, Dec. 17 Southern California Writers Association**
10:00 a.m. PST
Meeting
Southern California Writers Association will hold its monthly meeting at 10 a.m. Check the website for more details. [www.southerncalwriters.org](http://www.southerncalwriters.org).

**Saturday, Jan. 7 California Writers Club of Orange County**
9:00 a.m. PST
Meeting
California Writers Club of Orange County will feature “How to Write Good Antagonists,” a presentation by author Ash Bishop, at its monthly meeting, starting at 9 a.m. at the Anaheim Packing House, 440 S. Anaheim Blvd., Anaheim. [www.calwritersorangecounty.org](http://www.calwritersorangecounty.org).

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**Reading Corner**

**Book Reviews**

*The Girl Who Threw Butterflies*  
by Mick Cochrane

*The Giving Snowman*
Enola Holmes: the Case of the Missing Marquess
by Nancy Springer

Sherlock. Mycroft. And now Enola. With each iteration of the Holmes tale, a new complexity and depth are achieved.

A Netflix series starring Millie Bobby Brown, Eleven of Stranger Things, as well as a book, the story of Enola Holmes has a decidedly witty and humorous twist to the traditional Sherlock tales.

Enola’s mother disappears, leaving her daughter alone in a decidedly male world. Enola is not left unprepared, however. Her mother brought her up as an independent thinker, a master at figuring out word problems, and with enough money to not have to depend on the traditional notions of her elder brother, Mycroft Holmes.

Enola, which is alone spelled backwards, is significantly younger than her brothers and decidedly less traditionally raised. Her goals in the books are always two-fold: find her mother and solve any mystery she happens upon.

A thoroughly light Agatha Christie-esque plot line with very little historical accuracy or believability take this book to be along the lines of any historical fiction fantasy: realistic enough to attribute it to a time but anachronistic in its Molly Williams learned to throw a knuckleball pitch from her father. The two of them spent hours bonding over games of catch and watching baseball on TV as Molly grew up. But now Molly’s father is gone – he died in a car accident a few months ago and 8th grader Molly is alone in her grief. Her workaholic, distracted mother is unavailable emotionally, and Molly just can’t relate to her former teammates on the girls softball team any more. Impulsively, she tries out for the school baseball team as a way of expressing her truest self, using her pitching talent and honoring the memory of her father. Molly’s efforts to be accepted as the only girl on the team and to simultaneously work through the loss of her father are realistically chronicled in this short, poignant novel. Like the unpredictable flight of a knuckleball pitch (“Each floating and fluttering pitch was a little miracle. It was all about surprise”), Molly deals with sadness, anger, self-doubt and prejudice -- but also exhilaration, acceptance and reconciliation. Along the way she gets support from a loyal best friend, a caring coach, and the unexpected friendship of Lonnie, a catcher on the baseball team who understands what it’s like to lose a parent, albeit through divorce.

Molly’s voice rings true, and author Mick Cochrane does a fine job of capturing the

by Julia Zheng
Illustrated by Graziella Miligi

The Giving Snowman, written by Julia Zheng and illustrated by Graziella Miligi, is a lovely story about a snowman who selflessly gives to others. By the end of the story, the characters the snowman helped show their gratitude not only with words but also with their actions. It is a great, simple story to discuss the idea of giving during the holiday season but also the importance of expressing gratitude with words and actions. It is a great springboard read-aloud for discussion around giving and gratitude.

Allison Serceki
characters struggles and social mobility.

This is the book to read when you just need something to go a little wrong but be all the way right.

Liz Taireh

experience of an adolescent who unexpectedly loses a parent. Secondary characters are well-developed, and Cochrane succeeds in combining gentle humor, sports action and touching emotional moments (as when Molly surreptitiously sneaks into her father’s clothes closet and tries on his favorite brown corduroy jacket).

This book would be an especially good choice for teens dealing with a loss of their own, but will provide important insight into the grief process for all readers.

All students will care about Molly and find themselves rooting for her to succeed.

Megan Grint

Classroom Spotlight

Time-tested Strategies that Work
by Melissa Galvan

Back in 2012, I participated in the UCI Pathway Project as part of the AUHSD cohort of middle and high school teachers. In 2017, I was fortunate enough to join the UCI Summer Institute where I revisited many Pathway strategies and learned new ones. Here I am ten years later, and I still use the cognitive strategies approach to teaching reading and writing to my students.
As part of the AUHSD group I was a “heavy implementer” of the pre-and post-test tutorials. After the post-assessments I saw impressive growth in many areas of my students’ writing abilities, especially after the second year.

Since then, I have continued to use some tutorials, I have adapted the tutorial format for other pieces of literature, my posters still hang on the wall, and I have students analyze core literature using cognitive strategy graphic organizers that I call “CS Notes.”

The tools I learned to teach theme have been invaluable. I teach theme every year because it is so critical for students to identify an author’s purpose—it is a skill students in English 7 through seniors in AP Lit need to master. Identifying the big ideas in a text (visual or otherwise) and then composing a theme statement (or “statement of purpose” in AP Lang & Comp) are skills I incorporate into every unit my students work on. I still use the topic vs. theme handouts and the video clips CD (although I use a few different ones these days)!

Book Clubs are also a cornerstone of my teaching practice. Each quarter students choose a book to read and share it with their groups. In addition to some of my own activities, my students create theme collages, setting postcards, literature portraits, and stickman character analyses. One modification I have made is to connect book club selections to our core literature. For example, when my 8th graders read the drama The Diary of Anne Frank, they choose books that focus on a “victim of war,” not just a victim of World War II. That way, their understanding of the Franks' situation is bolstered by another story about surviving the hardships of war, plus it opens up more options for students.

**UCIWP Beyond the K-12 Classroom**

by Jenny Hall

The autumn I returned to my Villa Park High School classroom following the UCI Summer Institute was perhaps the most invigorated and inspired I had felt since my first year of teaching. It was 2008, and I was still buzzing with that creative and intellectual electricity you feel after an experience that leaves you changed. That first year, I probably did exactly what we were warned not to do: tried to incorporate absolutely everything from the Summer Institute into our class immediately. My students explored different aspects of themselves via imaginative triptychs and built writing gallery walls with Post-It Note feedback. Over the year, students used their Cognitive Strategies bookmarks and companion reading booklets to help assemble a deck of metacognition cards illustrating their thinking while reading novels, articles, and short stories.

After a decade in the high school classroom, I transitioned to working in the community colleges. I did not—to my own surprise as much as my colleagues’—join the ranks as an English instructor, but as a Counselor. The immediate gains were evident: more one-on-one time with students, fewer papers to grade, and the opportunity to learn something new and challenging. However, I was inwardly mourning the UCIWP lessons I anticipated leaving behind. I could not have been more wrong. I task my students with thinking about their thinking in my classroom, in other professors’ classrooms, and in my office. In our *Strategies for College Success* class, I help students develop the cognitive reading strategies, writing skills, critical thinking abilities, and emotional intelligence necessary for navigating the emotional and intellectual gymnasium of college. We apply cognitive thinking strategies while investigating the uses, biases, and limitations of college ranking systems and while mapping career and educational pathways that may differ from family expectations. I adapted Dawn and Dan Kirby’s “Prospecting for Stories” memoir activity to
help students generate ideas for their Personal Insight Questions on the UC transfer application. Unquestionably, the UCIWP is an integral part of how I interpret and share the world around me, and it infuses all of my work with students, regardless of the setting.

**Spotlight on a New Fellow**

**Bianca Tolentino**

Many of my students do not see themselves as participants in the worlds they inhabit; they see themselves as people where life happens to them. I found this fascinating because this is juxtaposed with how my students always want to post themselves on the internet and share their ideas in that way. They have voices, and they have the skills, but they don’t seem to understand how that skill transfers into being a part of their community. Because of this, My inquiry was all about finding ways to shift my students’ mindsets.

The visual analysis unit I developed explores the importance of photos and what they represent about the world we live in. As we go through analysis, I also position students to become creators themselves, to talk about something that matters to them. They create a meaningful visual composition that represents an issue that they care about and write an artistic statement on the piece.

I want this unit and my classroom to continue being a space where students can workshop their skills and see themselves as creators that have voices worthy of being a part of the conversation.
Help Wanted

The Young Writers Program is growing and thriving in our digital format! We are always on the lookout for new classes and instructors. As we look to grow our network of instructors, we would love for you to consider applying to teach a class! Classes happen three times a year fall (October - Dec.) spring (mid Feb. - April), and summer. If you would like to teach a class, please let us know. Classes are one day a week for 8 weeks and 1.5 hours each day for a total of 12 hours. Classes are capped at 12 students.

Classes that have been popular in the past are:
- Argument Writing grades 6-8
- Science Fiction or Fantasy 3/4 or 4/5 or 5/6
- Creating your own Graphic Novel 3/4 or 4/5 or 5/6
- Young Writers Network (This course would facilitate a writers group where students would get feedback from peers and the teacher on a short story or novel they are working on.) 3/4 or 4/5 or 5/6 or 7/8
- Journalism and Podcasting 6 - 8
- Poetry
- Fan/Fiction

We are always open to new class ideas and would love to hear what you would love to teach! Apply by emailing the Writing Project at: uciwritingproject@uci.edu

Angie Balius

Poet's Corner

The Winds of Change
By: Maria T. Jara

All around us the winds of change are blowing.
Some changes arrive as a soft breeze
Bolstering us
Encouraging us
Empowering us
Emboldening us
To rise up,
Looking toward the future
With positivity and
Endless possibilities.

Other changes arrive with hurricane force winds,
Blowing and blustering all around us,
Forcing us to hunker down
Shelter in place
And brace ourselves
For the aftermath of their fury.

So when those stormy winds abate,
We can regroup,
Regenerate
Refill our buckets
Rest
Relax
Read to our heart’s content
Reach out to family and friends
Reconnect with our spirituality
Recover our balance
And find peace and calm in the moment
To be ready for what lies ahead.